

# Boy Scout flag carried to Afghanistan, Iraq

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Most Boy Scouts are proud of their troop flags, showing them off in parades and during other special occasions.

Members of Olney-Brookeville-based Troop 264 now have another reason to be proud of their banner: It took a tour of Iraq and Afghanistan with a U.S. Navy pilot, collecting signatures of dozens of military personnel along the way.

Lt. Cmdr. Gregory Anderson of Brookeville is a member of the VR-1 squadron responsible for flying the Secretary of the Navy and other high-ranking personnel around the world. His son Jake, 11, is a member of Troop 264's Leopard Patrol.

Before he left on a trip to the Middle East in August, taking high-ranking Marine Corps personnel to visit troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, Anderson spent a week with Boys Scouts at summer camp in Goshen, Va. He suggested taking a troop flag along on the journey to have it signed by servicemen and servicewomen as a show of support for their efforts.

Scoutmaster Dennis Bogan

gave him a flag, which accompanied him to Bagram and Kabul, Afghanistan, as well as several places in Iraq, including Baghdad and Fallujah.

While there, Greg Anderson collected more than 70 signatures from members of the military.

"Greg said it lifted the spirits of the soldiers and they felt like celebrities," Anderson's wife, Sheryl, said. "There were even guys there from Maryland that were especially excited about signing it. These are guys who work 20-hour days, so we really appreciate that they took the time to sign it."

When his father returned home with the flag, Jake, whom his mother calls "Mr. Patriotic," was thrilled.

"Many members of the Marines and the Army signed it, including a bunch of special operations guys," Jake said, adding the flag also stopped in Ghana, Africa, on the way home.

"I'm really proud of all of the people serving in our military and thankful that they took the time to appreciate our troop," he said.

Jake Anderson said many of the soldiers included inspiring messages in addition to their signatures.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TROOP 264

Holding a troop flag that visited Afghanistan and Iraq are Scouts Jake Anderson (left) and Victor Santos, a senior patrol leader.

"They wrote a lot of meaningful things that will help our troop," he said. "My favorite was, 'Stay true to your dream and always follow that and it will take you where you want to be.'"

Greg Anderson presented the flag to the troop during a recent meeting. The troop meets every Monday at St. John's Episcopal

Church.

Bogan said the flag and the message it conveyed to the boys were "phenomenal."

"We displayed it at our troop meetings and at Back to School Nights for the Cub Scout packs that feed into us," he said. "My plan is to take it anyplace we can and to explain it to people."

## HOW TO HELP

Troop 264 sends monthly packages to servicemen and servicewomen as part of its Adopt-A-Soldier program. For more information about the program and how to help, visit the troop's Web site at [www.troop264olney.net/adoptasoldier.html](http://www.troop264olney.net/adoptasoldier.html).

Bogan said Troop 264, sponsored by Norman Price American Legion Post 68 of Brookeville, has participated in an Adopt-a-Soldier program for the past few years, collecting items to send to the troops serving in the Middle East each month.

Recent items collected have included Beanie Babies, soccer balls and school supplies for the soldiers to hand out to children and dog treats and chew toys for canine units.

Jake Anderson has participated in the program and recently collected snacks to send to soldiers.

It's important to let them know that we are still supporting them while they are fighting for our country," he said.